

Motorcyclists and motorists encouraged to 'share the road'

By: Robin Jenkins

Motorcycle fatalities have doubled since 2003, and Kentucky's fatality rate is now second-highest in the nation. One of every nine U.S. road fatalities involves motorcycle riders. The steady increase in fatalities over the past decade represents one of the commonwealth's greatest highway safety challenges.

To increase awareness and safer driving practices, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is promoting motorcycle safety. All travelers are encouraged to "share the road," be courteous, and stay alert during the busy summer travel season.

"With warmer weather here, more motorcycles are back on the roads. Drivers of all vehicles need to be extra cautious," said Secretary of Transportation Joe Prather. "Motorcyclists can be difficult to see, so it's important that we all follow the rules of the road and stay alert."

Motorcycle riders are far more vulnerable to death or serious injury than motor vehicle passengers. Eighty percent of motorcycle crashes result in death or injury - four times the rate for crashes involving cars and trucks. In terms of vehicle miles traveled, motorcyclists are 35 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle traffic crash.

Safe driving tips:

- ♦Remember to allow a motorcyclist the full lane width. Although it may seem as though there is enough room in a traffic lane for both an automobile and a motorcycle, the motorcycle needs the full room to maneuver safely —never try to share a lane.
- ♦Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic.
- ♦Remember that motorcyclists are often hidden in a vehicle's blind spot or missed in a quick look due to their smaller size. Always make a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic or proceeding at intersections.
- ♦Be aware that motorcycle signals usually are not self-canceling and riders sometimes forget to turn them off. Wait to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn before you proceed.
- ♦Remember that road conditions which are minor annoyances to passenger vehicles pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Be aware that motorcyclists may need to change speed or adjust their position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road and traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- ♦Allow more following distance, three or four seconds, when following a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. Do not tailgate. In dry conditions, motorcycles can stop more quickly than cars.
- ♦Follow the rules of the road, be alert to other vehicles, and always wear your seatbelt or DOT-compliant helmets and protective gear.



"Our message to all drivers is clear," Prather said. "Make this the first year in recent years when motorcycle fatalities do not increase. Help to share in the responsibility and do your part to share the road with everyone." □